



Fraud Newsletter

December 2007

Sheriff Steve Mansfield

Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County

*"If it's too good to be true
it normally is"*

Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.

Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.

PROTECT YOUR ID

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County

Lottery Prize Scams

By far this is the number one scam that continues to hit Lewis County residents. During the last month we have had several reports of people receiving phone calls from individuals who claim to represent Lotteries. The pitch is always the same, "Congratulations – You have won." The caller then explains they will be sending a check to the winner and obtains mailing information. They may also at this time attempt to get personal information such as Social Security Number and birthdates. When the check arrives it is usually only a portion of the amount the caller claimed you had won. The instructions with the check tell you to cash it and return a portion to pay for taxes and other fees. As soon as these amounts are received your remaining money will be coming. It is all a scam – REMEMBER– you cannot win a lottery you have never entered.

Be Aware of Construction Scams and Frauds

"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"

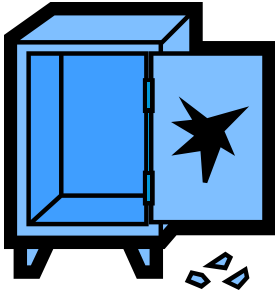
The residents of Lewis County have just gone through a period of extreme weather leading to flooding in many parts of the county. These natural disasters are a prime hunting ground for thieves and scam artists. If you have had property damaged during the flood and are attempting to have repairs made, please make sure you know the contractors who are doing the work. Here is a short list of things you should do to help protect yourself.

1. You should always check references of a contractor before work is started.
2. Always be leery of contractors demanding full payment before work begins.
3. Check to make sure the contractor is licensed to do the work he intends to do.
4. Always obtain an estimate before agreeing to any construction work.
5. Be leery of estimates that are substantially lower than others you have obtained for the same work.

Internet Fraud

"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"

The Holiday Season is upon us and this is the time of year many of us are making lots of purchases on-line. The scam artists and crooks are aware of this and are making every effort to take some of our hard earned cash. A scam last year involved emails claiming they are a "Purchase Verification." It is normal for on-line merchants to send these out to you after you have made a purchase to show you the transaction has been completed. The scam email claims you have purchased some high value item, such as a computer. It then gives you an option to go to a website to cancel the purchase if you did not authorize it. The email is from a company you do not know and it does not identify you or the credit card that was used. If you go to the link, then you will be asked to provide your personal and credit card information. It's all a scam be very careful when providing personal information.



The internet is a powerful tool used by both legitimate businesses and scam artists alike. Always take steps to protect yourself and your personal information as you would protect your home or car.

Who should I notify about a fraud or scam attempt?

- Federal Trade Commission toll free hotline: 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357)
- Federal Trade Commission on-line complaint form (www.ftc.gov)
- Internet Fraud Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov/)
- **Lewis County Sheriff's Office – 360-740-1329**

Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center -
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page -
<http://www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



*Sheriff Steven Mansfield
Committed to make a difference.*